

Mouth Breather by JoMo3

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Summary:

Mike and Eleven attend a school dance.

Mouth Breather

Mike...

Yeah?

Friends tell the truth.

I was tripped by this mouth breather, Troy, okay?

Mouth breather?

Yeah, you know...a dumb person. A knucklehead.

Knucklehead?

I don't know why I just didn't tell you. Everyone at school knows. I just didn't want you to think I was such a wastoid, you know?

Mike...

Yeah?

I understand.

It was the first Thursday in April, and the whole gang was over at Mike's house, eating dinner. With all of the extra people sitting at her dining room table, Karen Wheeler had to squeeze in a few chairs. She sat next to her husband, with Holly on her other side. At the ends of the table sat Dustin on one end and Nancy across from him on the other. Somehow Mike, El, Will, and Lucas were able to share one side of the table.

The boys dominated the conversation, talking about an upcoming science project they were all excited about. El quietly ate her food next to Mike. Karen couldn't help but smile; she knew both kids were smitten with each other. And, when Holly had dropped her spoon earlier and Karen had bent to pick it up, she'd seen that the two teens were holding hands under the table.

"Hey," Will said, "This weekend let's go to The Palace. Jonathan told me they just put in a new Frogger game."

"Cool," Mike said. "Saturday afternoon?"

"Saturday night," Lucas said. "I've got to buy a suit for the dance next week."

“A dance?,” Karen asked. “What dance is this?”

“It’s the Spring Fling,” Lucas said.

“Yeah, he’s taking Candace Waterson,” Dustin said with a grin.

“That’s sweet,” Karen said. Turning to her son, she asked “Mike, what about you, are you taking El?”

Mike’s face turned red as he pushed his green beans around on his plate. “Uh, I don’t know, mom, maybe.”

El glanced at him. “A dance?”

“He hasn’t asked you to go?” Will asked.

El looked at her lap, shaking her head.

“Jeez, Mike,” Lucas said. “It’s bad enough you haven’t asked her to be...”

“Okay, that’s enough,” Mike said, putting his fork down. “Can we...talk about something else now?”

On the other end of the table, Nancy smiled, but didn’t say anything to Mike.

After dinner, as the boys prepared to go home, Mike pulled Eleven aside.

“I’m sorry I didn’t ask you to the dance yet,” he told her.

When she didn’t say anything, he continued.

“I was *gonna* ask you this weekend, really. I just...I don’t know, got nervous.”

“Why?” she asked in her quiet voice.

He shook his head. “I don’t know. It’s, you know, a big deal. And I...” he turned a light shade of red, “I’m not the best dancer.”

She smiled at him. "Mike..."

"Yeah?"

"I don't care."

"About what?"

"About you being a good dancer."

"Oh. Okay, cool. Do, uh..would you like to go to the dance with me?"

She nodded her head.

He smiled like he'd just won the lottery. "Okay. Um, tomorrow, we can talk more about it, okay?"

"Okay."

He was about to lean in to give her a kiss when the boys called over and asked "El, you coming?"

Smiling, she stood on tiptoe to kiss Mike's cheek. "Tomorrow," she said.

"Tomorrow," he repeated.

She joined the boys by the basement door. El had recently mastered riding a bike, and loved riding around with them. Saying goodbye to Mike, the three boys and El left the Wheelers' home.

When Mike got up to his room, Nancy was waiting for him.

"What're you doing in here?" he asked.

Quietly, she asked "You haven't asked Eleven to be your girlfriend yet?"

"What? How..how did you know?"

"Your friends, genius. Mike, what's wrong with you?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I...I don't know, I guess I thought that...she would say no, or she wouldn't know what it means."

"Mike, why would El say no to you? When has she *ever* said no to you? You didn't think she'd say yes when you asked her out, but she did. I'm guessing you've asked her, by now, to go to this dance with you, huh?"

Mike nodded his head.

"So *ask* her, Mike. She obviously cares about you; enough to hold your hand at dinner."

"Wait, you saw that?"

"Everyone saw that," she said, walking to the doorway. "If you don't ask her to be your girlfriend soon, I'm going to have to nudge Dustin her way."

"Ew," Mike said, making a face.

When El biked home, Hopper wasn't there yet. So she let herself in and went about tidying up the trailer. The chief always said he would get to it, but never did. She usually liked cleaning, but did so today because she needed a favor from him.

She was almost done when she saw his headlights pull onto the gravel road. Using her telekinesis to close the cupboards, she sat on the couch as he opened the door.

"Ellie!" he said with a smile when he came in. Looking around, he was surprised. "Wow. You did all of this?"

She smiled, and nodded her head.

"Hm." He put his hands on his hips. "What is it you want?"

Shyly, she said, "A dance. With Mike."

Hopper rolled his eyes. "Jesus. When is it?"

“Um...next week?”

“What do you need?”

She shrugged her shoulders.

“Joyce or someone will take you to get a dress.”

“Nancy?”

“Yeah, or Nancy.”

“Thanks, Hop,” she said, hugging him.

Saturday afternoon Mike was down in his basement, working on the upcoming campaign when there was a knock on the basement door. He wasn't surprised when he opened it and saw El.

She gave him a hug and came inside. She asked “Is Nancy home?”

“Yeah, why...why do you need Nancy? I thought you wanted to talk about the dance?”

“I do,” El said, “but I need to ask Nancy something.”

“Oh. Okay.”

She climbed up the stairs, while Mike took a seat and opened his notebook back up.

In his head he debated whether or not he should ask her to be his girlfriend right now, or sometime later. He honestly was mad at himself for not asking her; he didn't know you were *supposed* to ask a girl that. His friends already assumed she was his girlfriend, and honestly, so did he. Why was it supposed to be asked?

A few minutes later he heard El's quiet footsteps coming back down the stairs. Smiling, she sat next to him on the couch.

“Is everything okay?” he asked.

She nodded. "Yes. I need a dress for the dance, and I wanted to ask Nancy if she'd take me."

"Oh. Is she?"

El nodded.

"Cool." Taking her hand, he said, "I'm really glad we're going to the dance together."

"Me too," she said, squeezing his hand. She then asked "Is dancing...hard?"

Mike smiled. "I don't know. For me it is. Lucas is really good at it. Dustin thinks he is, but he's not. But slow dancing is easy."

"Slow dancing?"

"Yeah, it's when you..." he stood up, and motioned for her to stand as well. "It's when you dance like this." Taking her hands, he put her arms on his shoulders and he hesitantly put his on her waist.

She smiled at his nervousness, then asked "What happens next?"

"You kind of move, side to side," he said, moving slightly. She followed his cue and did the same.

A smile came to her lips. "Easy."

"Yeah, easy," Mike said, though his fast beating heart would beg to differ.

"What do people do at..dances?"

"Oh, you don't know?" he asked, surprised.

She shook her head.

"Well, people, you know, dance, obviously. And drink punch. And talk to people."

"Will there be a lot of people?"

Mike shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know, maybe. I've never been to one before."

"Never?"

"No. You're the..." he blushed, then looked at her. "You're the only person I've ever wanted to go to one with."

She returned the blush. Smiling, she leaned closer and gave him a kiss.

Now, Mike thought, *Is the perfect time*. Taking a deep breath, he said "Hey, El?"

"Yes?"

"Can I ask you a question?"

She nodded her head.

"Um...would you..."

Suddenly the basement door opened, and Will came rushing in. "I've got a date to the dance!" he exclaimed.

"Uh...what?" Mike asked. He and El let go of each other.

Dustin came in after Will, closing the door. "He's going to the dance, with Wendy Scott." Dustin slumped into a chair at the game table.

"Congratulations, Will," Mike told him. "You okay, Dustin?"

"I asked Lindsay Fuller," Dustin said. "But she said no."

"Sorry," Mike said.

The group spent the rest of the afternoon hanging out in the basement. When it was time for them to meet up with Lucas to go to the Palace, El pulled Mike aside before they left.

"What did you want to ask me?" she said.

"Oh, uh..nothing. It can wait. C'mon, let's catch up with the guys."

El shrugged her shoulders and followed Mike, who was inwardly kicking himself.

The next few days seemed to fly by. Before they knew it, it was Friday night, the night of the dance.

Nancy and El had gone out and bought her a floral sundress; Dustin, still dateless, decided to tag along to the dance with his friends anyway; Lucas had attempted to teach Mike some dance moves to no avail; and Jonathan and Joyce had pooled some money to buy Will a suit for the dance.

Lucas' dad was taking him over to his date's house and then the dance; Mrs. Scott was driving Will and Wendy to the dance, with Dustin tagging along. Hopper dropped El off at the Wheelers.

As per when she usually dressed up, Mike was taken by surprise by how pretty she looked, which made her blush to no end. The two awkwardly posed for pictures while Karen Wheeler snapped away and gave suggestions:

"Hold her hand, Mike. Awww ." *Snap*

"Smile, honey!" *Snap*

"El, lay your head on his shoulder. Awww ." *Snap*

"Holly, move out of the way." *Snap*

"You two are so adorable," Karen told the teens.

" Mom ," Mike responded, embarrassed.

"Okay, mom, that's enough," Nancy said, trying to save her brother. She had volunteered to drive the two to the dance. "Come on, you two; while the night's still young."

Mike and El sat together in the back seat. Nancy had the radio on in

an attempt to give them some kind of privacy.

“El, you look really nice,” Mike said, fighting his urge to blush once more.

El giggled and nodded her head. “Thank you, Mike. You look nice, too.”

Smiling, he asked “You're not nervous, are you?” He was afraid she would be with a gymnasium full of kids she didn't know.

Tentatively, she nodded. “A little.”

Taking her hand in his, he said “I'm going to be there the whole time. The other guys, too. So if you get scared or nervous or anything, let one of us know, alright?”

She nodded her head. “Thanks, Mike.”

He smiled back as she squeezed his hand.

When they arrived at the school, they found Lucas and his date, Candace, waiting for them outside. Nancy told them she'd be back at nine to pick them up.

El had been to the gymnasium before, for the “memorial” of Will, but she'd never seen it like this: strung lights hung from the ceiling, giving the room an intimate appearance, tables lined the sides of the room, and there were lots of kids, dressed up, as music blared from the speakers.

As they stood in the doorway, Mike turned to her. “Are you okay?”

She nodded her head. “It's pretty.”

The group found an empty table near the back. Lucas introduced Candace to El, who he introduced as Mike's “friend,” getting a glare from Mike. Minutes later Dustin, Will, and Wendy entered the gymnasium. Dustin made a beeline straight to the table while Wendy pulled Will towards where her friends were sitting. Will shrugged his

shoulders as he passed his friends.

“Well, he’s gone,” Lucas said.

Just then the song “ABC” by the Jackson 5 began playing. Candace pulled Lucas out to the dancefloor.

“Do you want to dance, El?” Mike asked, hoping she didn’t. He wasn’t sure he was ready to embarrass himself this early.

She shook her head nervously. “Not yet.”

Mike nodded. “Okay. Um, do you want some punch, then?”

She nodded her head.

“Okay. Be right back.”

Mike left, and El watched Lucas and Candace dancing together. She noticed, out of the side of her eye, a group of girls looking at her. She glanced over at them, and they turned away.

Turning to Dustin, she asked “Are you okay?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know. I shouldn’t be here.”

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t have a date.”

El frowned. “You can still ask somebody to dance.”

“Yeah, I guess,” he said, looking around the room.

“Here,” Mike said, coming back with two cups of fruit punch.

“Thank you,” she said.

He sat next to her, and shook his head at Lucas and Candace. “I wish I could dance like that,” he said.

Eleven took a sip from her drink and lay her head on Mike’s shoulder. Mike looked down at her and smiled.

The song ended, and “Girls Just Want to Have Fun,” started to play. Lucas walked back towards their table, but Candace motioned for El to join her.

When El shook her head, Candace came over and pulled her out of her chair, saying “Come on, I *love* this song.”

Reluctantly, El allowed Candace to pull her to the floor. The two girls started hopping up and down to the song.

Back at the table, Mike chuckled as he watched El. Sitting in El’s abandoned chair, Lucas asked, “So are you going to dance tonight, or just sit back and watch?”

“I’m waiting for a slow song,” Mike said. Then, a little quieter, said “I’m going to ask El to be my girlfriend tonight.”

Lucas shook his head. “I still can’t believe you haven’t asked her, man.”

“I was too afraid to ask, I guess.”

“Afraid of what? She’s not going to say no, Mike.”

“I know, but....I guess I wanted her to know what it means.” They both took notice of the fact that Dustin wasn’t there.

“Where’s Dustin?” Mike asked.

Smiling, Lucas pointed across the room. “There.”

Dustin was talking to a group of girls, laughing with them.

The song ended, and Candace and El giggled their way back to the table. Lucas moved over a seat so El could sit next to Mike.

“Did you have fun?” Mike asked her.

She smiled, nodding her head as she took a sip of punch.

A few minutes later “Crazy for You” began to play, the first slow song

of the night. Mike watched as Will and Wendy went to the floor to dance, followed by Lucas and Candace.

Turning to El, he saw that she was smiling at their friends. Plucking up his courage, he asked “Hey, El? Would you like to dance?”

She smiled, and took his hand as they both stood up and made their way towards the center of the room. As they began to slowly sway side to side, El again noticed the group of girls looking at she and Mike.

“You okay?” Mike asked her.

“Hm?” She turned back to face him. “Yes.”

They danced quietly for a little, Mike trying not to step on El’s shoes, and El soaking in every moment. Taking his eyes off of El for a second, Mike smiled.

“Look,” he told her.

She turned and smiled as well. Dustin had found a girl to dance with.

“She’s pretty,” El said.

“Not as pretty as you,” Mike said.

She blushed, and rose up and kissed his cheek.

After the song was over, El excused herself to use the restroom. After doing her business, she was all set to flush and exit the stall when a group of girls entered the bathroom, startling her.

“I can’t believe those nerds are here,” one girl said.

“Well, Lucas is kind of cute,” another girl said.

“Yeah, but can you believe *Mike Wheeler* is here with a date? I mean, ew,” the first girl said, causing the other girls to laugh.

“And who’s that girl he’s with?” a third girl asked.

"I don't know, but something must be wrong with her to be here with a loser like him."

El's face reddened in anger.

"I like her dress," the second girl said.

Gathering her courage, El flushed the toilet and came out of the stall as the other girls took notice of her. They were the same girls who'd been looking at her earlier.

"Oh, hey," the leader of the pack said.

El shot her a glance, and then went about washing her hands. As she dried them off, she heard the girls whisper something and then giggle. El spun on her heels at them.

"Why are you laughing?"

"Nothing," one of them said.

"Hey, what school do you go to?" the first girl asked.

"I...I don't go to school."

"Why, are you, like, stupid or something?"

The other two girls barely held back a giggle.

"No," El said. "I'm not in school...yet."

"Why're you here with a loser like Mike Wheeler?" the first girl asked.

El was confused. "Mike isn't a loser. He's my friend."

That made the group giggle more; El decided she didn't like these girls.

"Yeah, well, your friend looks like a frog."

El glared at her. "Stop it."

“What?” the leader asked.

“Stop being mean..mouth breather.”

The first girl walked closer to El, forcing her to take a step back. She pushed El's shoulder lightly. “What if I don't? What're you going to do, loser?”

El suddenly felt overwhelmed and afraid; she knew she could easily send this girl flying through the air, but she also knew not to use her powers around people that she didn't know.

“S-stop it,” El said again.

The girl pushed her once more, a little harder this time, and El hit the wall behind her.

As the girl took a step forward, and El tried to think of what to do, the door to the bathroom opened, and Candace came in. “El? Is everything okay?”

Eleven shook her head, and pushed past Candace, out of the bathroom.

Mike found her a few minutes later in the AV room, sitting on the floor with her knees to her chest, silently crying.

“El?” he asked from the doorway. “Are you alright?”

She shook her head as she wiped her tears on her dress. “No.”

Mike sat next to her on the floor, their backs against a desk. “What happened?”

Sniffling, El responded “There were...girls in the bathroom. Saying mean things.”

“To you?” Mike asked, looking ready to pounce.

She nodded her head. “And about...you,” she said, looking at him

with sad eyes. Mike wrapped an arm around her.

“What’d they say?”

“They called you a loser. And they said....something is wrong with me.”

Mike balled his fists in anger. “Who were they?”

“ *Mike* ,” she said, putting her head on his shoulder. He relaxed a little.

“I’m sorry, El,” he told her. “Nothing is wrong with you.”

“But I’m...different.”

“Yeah, but can’t you see that’s good? Being different is a good thing, El. That’s what makes you special.”

She shook her head. “Powers don’t count.”

“I’m not talking about your powers, El. You’re one of the kindest, sweetest, people I know. You saved me, you helped us save Will and you didn’t even know him!”

“But that was my powers, Mike.”

Mike sighed in frustration. “But El, you did all of that for us and you barely even knew us. You were ready to help us and we were strangers to you. Ignore them. They’re just a bunch of...”

“Mouth breathers?” El asked.

“Yeah, El. Mouth breathers. You’re one of the best people I know.”

They sat in silence for a minute before she said, “Thank you, Mike.”

He kissed the top of her head. “Do you want to go back in?”

She nodded, and he helped her up to her feet. Before they left the room, however, he turned to her. “Hey, um, El?”

“Yes?”

“Um...I wanted to ask you something.”

He took her hand in his, and took a deep breath.

“I know I should’ve asked you this earlier, but, I don’t know, I guess I got too scared you might say no, but Nancy told me...”

“Mike..”

“Sorry,” he said, stopping his rambling. “Um..would you be my girlfriend?”

“What’s that?”

“It’s, uh,” he paused, thinking of how to describe it. “It means that we’re more than friends, you know? It means that I’ll only date you, and you’ll only date me.”

She smiled widely and hugged him tight. “Yes,” she said into his chest.

Mike hugged her tighter and smiled.

When they got back to the gymnasium, Lucas and Candace came rushing up to them.

“What happened?” Lucas asked.

“Nothing,” Mike said.

“Mike asked me to be his girlfriend,” El said, smiling.

Mike blushed, Candace congratulated El, and Lucas said “It’s about time!”

Just then the music changed to a slow one. Mike looked at El. “Do you want to dance?”

She nodded.

The two made their way out to the dance floor. El put her arms

around Mike's neck, and he put hers on her hips as they started to move.

"I'm sorry this wasn't the best trip to school," he told her.

She shrugged. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the group of girls she'd encountered in the bathroom. Mike followed her eyes and smirked.

"That's Felicia Woods and her friends. Are they the mouth breathers from the bathroom?"

As Eleven nodded her head, Mike started to pull away and walk towards the girls. Pulling on his hand, El guided him back to her.

"No," she said.

"But..."

She shook her head. "They're not worth it."

Mike glared over at the girls once more, then put his arms back on El's waist.

"I'm sorry," he told her.

"Don't be," she said. "I like that you want to...project me."

Mike smiled at her. "Pro *tect* you."

She nodded her head. As they continued to dance, El looked over at Felicia and concentrated really hard. A second later, the back of Felicia's skirt flipped up, and she suddenly tripped and fell forward, her hands stopping her from falling flat on her face. People around her began to laugh.

Mike turned and saw what was happening, then turned and looked at El. "Did you...?"

El didn't answer, she just smiled, and wiped the spot of blood appearing under her nose.

“I have the coolest girlfriend *ever* ,” Mike muttered.

Author's Note:

Hope you liked it. Kudos and comments are appreciated.